



Australian Government



Australian
Charities and
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Commission

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND INTERNAL DISPUTES

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Good governance means handling internal disputes well

There are many things you and your charity can do to ensure a healthy and robust environment for handling internal disputes:

- Develop a culture of open and respectful communication.
- Check your charity's rules and relevant legislation about handling disputes.
- Make time for those in dispute to meet face-to-face to discuss their dispute openly.
- Maintain a respectful and non-judgemental attitude.
- Listen carefully. Acknowledge what is said and ask questions without expressing an opinion.
- If an agreement or compromise cannot be reached, consider using an independent mediator. Discuss who will pay for the cost (if any) of mediation before engaging the mediator. In some states and territories, there are free mediation services. Also check if your peak body offers this service.



Common mistakes made by charities when handling internal disputes

When handling internal disputes:

- Don't ignore or avoid an issue. Disputes can drive down morale, affect the reputation of an organisation and distract you from undertaking the important work of your charity. Reduce the impact of potential disputes by raising and dealing with issues quickly.
- Don't interrupt others while they are speaking or dismiss different perspectives. Everyone needs to feel heard as part of the resolution process.
- Remember to review the progress of agreed actions. Once a strategy has been implemented, review how it is working including talking to those involved. Dispute resolution can sometimes be an ongoing process.

